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# INTERMEDIARIES IN JEWISH THEOLOGY

MEMRA, SHEKINAH, METATRON

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## I. MEMRA, SHEKINAH

THE Christian interpretation of the Old Testament was early set upon finding in it a figure corresponding to the Son, or the Word (Logos), in the New Testament, a divine being, intermediary between God the Father and the world in creation, revelation, and redemption. For Christian theology, with its philosophical presumptions, a God who visibly and audibly manifested himself to men in human form and action was necessarily such a being; the Supreme God, in his supramundane exaltation or his metaphysical transcendence, could not be imagined thus immediately to intervene in mundane affairs. In this assumption and to a considerable extent in their particular interpretations the Fathers had a precursor in the Jewish theologian Philo. One of the chief ends of their apologetic was to demonstrate to Jews — or against them — *first*, that their own Scriptures made the existence of such a being undeniable; and *second*, that — incarnate, crucified, risen, enthroned at the right hand of God, presently to come in judgment — he was no other than the Messiah whom the Jews had rejected and the Lord whom the Christians worshipped as Saviour.

From apologetic this passed into the tradition of both exegesis and dogmatics, and was to Christian consciousness so self-evident that no other understanding of the Old Testament seemed possible. Accordingly, when argument with Jews was revived in the thirteenth century it was assumed that ancient and unprejudiced Jewish students of the Scriptures must have understood them in the same way, however their successors, in the exigencies of controversy, might dissimulate the fact.

On this presumption Christian scholars searched the earlier Jewish literature, the Targums,<sup>1</sup> Talmuds, and Midrash, for Christian doctrine, or at least adumbrations of it. Such research continued in the succeeding centuries down to the eighteenth; a vast mass of testimony was uncritically accumulated, and conclusions drawn which obtained general assent and continue to be accepted in some quarters to the present time. In the Memra of the Targums, the Word (Logos) was recognized, so to speak, in his own name and character; the Shekinah was sometimes taken for the Second Person of the Trinity, sometimes for the Third; after cabalistic studies came into vogue, the mysterious Metatron joined the ranks of the intermediaries.<sup>2</sup>

As was pointed out in a former article in this Review,<sup>3</sup> the material that was diligently collected to prove that Jewish theology made a place for a being (or beings) of divine nature through whose mediation the ends of the Supreme God were effectuated in the world of nature and of men as they were in Christian theology by the Son and Spirit has more recently been appropriated to prove that Jewish theology, *unlike* Christian, interposed intermediaries between God and the world, rendered necessary by its 'transcendent' idea of God, of which error, conversely, the invention of such intermediaries is the proof. Christian investigation and discussion of the terms Memra and Shekinah have thus in all stages been inspired and directed by a theological motive, and the results come around in a circle to the theological prepossessions from which they set out.

Jewish discussion of the subject has generally approached it as a phase of the problem of the anthropomorphisms of Scripture.<sup>4</sup> Maimonides, in particular, who combated the notion that God had body or form not only as irrational but as a deadly heresy, and expended much ingenuity at the very beginning of his *Moreh* in interpreting the seemingly anthropomorphic expressions of Scripture as metaphors or otherwise rendering them innocuous, claimed the authority of Onkelos for this principle and procedure. 'Onkelos, the proselyte, perfectly versed in Hebrew and Aramaic, takes all pains to remove the

ascription of corporeity (to God), and whenever the Scripture employs an expression that suggests corporeity, he interprets it according to its (true) meaning.' 'Onkelos avoids the ascription of corporeity (to God), and everything that might in the remotest way suggest it.' <sup>5</sup> Such, indeed, according to Maimonides, must be the endeavor of every intelligent man.

Maimonides' own Arab-Aristotelian metaphysic prescribed to him the idea of God as simple Unity in so rigorous a sense as to exclude not only all likeness to man, bodily or mental, but all attributes, whether defined as essential, accessory, or relative, and led him to regard the ascription of any attributes as only a subtler form of the anthropomorphism which attributed to him organs or actions. Of the latter, motion was peculiarly objectionable, since it put God in space; and rest, because it implied motion as its opposite. Onkelos seemed to him to share this objection, for he regularly paraphrases passages in which God is said to go or come, to ascend or descend, etc., sometimes by the introduction of *memra*, sometimes of *yekara*, most frequently of *shekinta*. In so doing, he believed that Onkelos had given the true meaning, whilst the letter of Scripture was levelled to the apprehension of the common man. The Glory or the Presence of God, as he conceived it, was not a reverent circumlocution for God, but a created light by which God's invisible presence was manifest to men; and similarly the voice, or the word, of God was a created sound.<sup>6</sup> In thus describing them Maimonides excludes personality and participation in the divine nature. His *Memra* and *Shekinah* may be called intermediary agencies, not intermediate beings, if there be any profit in labelling them at all. His contemporary, R. Moses ben Nahman, in his commentary on Gen. 46, 4 (a verse with which Maimonides had to wrestle as an apparent exception in Onkelos), and on Exod. 20, 16, contests the adequacy of the principle Maimonides ascribes to Onkelos to account for the phenomena, as well as the validity of his explanation. How the critic himself conceived the *Shekinah* and the rest is not made clear. None of these writers subjected the usage of Onkelos to a comprehensive analysis; the discussion turned chiefly about a few striking verses in the Pentateuch.

A sounder method of investigation is adopted by modern Jewish scholars who have dealt with the question. First among these stands Samuel David Luzzatto, with his *אורח* (Philoxenus), published in 1830. Luzzatto minutely analyses the changes Onkelos makes in his translation, and classifies them by the reasons for them. More than this, he put investigation on the right track by laying down at the outset the proposition, 'The Targum was not made for scholars, but for the unlettered masses' (p. 1) — a proposition which was, he was well aware, as revolutionary as it is sound. Luzzatto's own discussion of *memra*, *yekara*, and *shekinta* is brief, and he fortifies himself with the authority of a long quotation from Isaac Arama, who treats them as respectful circumlocutions. A special investigation, largely occupied with these particular terms, was made by Siegmund Maybaum, 'Die Anthropomorphien und Anthropopathien bei Onkelos und den späteren Targumim (Breslau, 1870), which is a comprehensive — for *memra* in Onkelos an exhaustive — mustering and classification of the relevant passages by the side of the Hebrew original with explanatory comment. The most thorough investigation of the whole subject is that of M. Ginsburger, 'Die Anthropomorphismen in den Thargumim,' in the *Jahrbücher für protestantische Theologie*, XVII (1891), pp. 262–280 and 430–458, which contains by far the most comprehensive collection of examples, and is of especial importance for its full presentation of the usage of the Palestinian Targums, which his predecessors had adduced only casually, devoting their attention almost solely to Onkelos. In the second part of his study the usage of the Targums on the Hagiographa is also set forth.

A re-examination of the subject from a philological point of view is the purpose of the present article, in which no attempt is made to record the very extensive literature or the history of interpretation.<sup>7</sup> For a complete understanding of the motive of the translators in using these particular terms it would be necessary to consider them in the larger connection of the whole usage of the Targums in their substitutions and paraphrases, but this is much too extensive a subject to be entered upon here. The English reader may profitably acquaint himself with

Luzzatto's exhibition of this usage as summarized by E. Deutsch in Smith's Dictionary of the Bible, American Edition, Vol. IV, pp. 3404-3407.

It may not be superfluous to correct at the outset any notion that Onkelos and the others in their versions systematically, if not altogether consistently, eliminate or neutralize the anthropomorphisms of the original. Assertions of this sort are indeed still found in books that the layman naturally takes for authorities.<sup>8</sup> The same erroneous impression may be acquired from works which deal methodically with the procedure of the translators in this matter. The attention of the author and the reader is there concentrated on the cases and occasions in which expressions are modified that, at least in the vernacular, sounded irreverent or undignified, and circumlocutions introduced where a literal rendering literally understood might fortify the common man's imagination of a God who behaved too much like himself. The complement of this one-sided impression, namely the limited range of such paraphrases and the wide extent in which the Targums leave the anthropomorphisms of the original untouched, can only come by continuous reading of the Targums, and only in the same way can the peculiarities of the several Targums be learned. Any one, however, who will take the trouble to read the Targum of Onkelos on the story of the Garden of Eden in Gen. 2-3, or on God's visit to Abraham in Gen. 18, will be disabused of the notion that the translator shrinks from a literal rendering of even the most palpable anthropomorphisms. On the other hand, circumlocutions and buffer-words are introduced with a good deal of consistency in places that seem to us much more harmless.

This is strikingly true of the uses of *memra*, generally translated 'word,' and frequently printed with a question-begging capital, 'the Word.' To dispel misunderstandings at the outset we may begin by showing when and how *memra* is *not* used. First, then, 'the *memra* of the Lord' in the Targums is not employed as the Aramaic equivalent of 'the word of the Lord' (דבר יהוה) in the Hebrew Scriptures. The Hebrew *dabar*, in all senses and uses, is customarily rendered in the Targums by

*pitgama*. The 'word of the Lord,' or 'of God,' is *pitgama de-Y*. (e.g. Gen. 15, 1), not *memra de-Y*.; <sup>9</sup> and similarly in 'my word,' 'thy word,' 'his word,' when the pronouns refer to God. The word of the Lord to a prophet is *pitgam nebu'a*, a word of prophecy, e.g. Hosea 1, 2, 'the word of prophecy from before Y. which was with Hosea.' See also 1 Kings 12, 22; Jer. 1, 2, 4, 11, 13; 2, 1, etc. It is idle to multiply examples of a uniform usage. It holds in the cases which seem to approach most nearly to a personification of the 'word of the Lord,' such as Isa. 40, 8, 'The grass withereth, the flower fadeth, but the word of our God abideth forever'; Targum, 'The wicked man dies and his plans perish, but the word of our God (*pitgama de-elahana*) abideth forever; Isa. 55, 11 (*pitgam tubi*); Jer. 23, 29 (*kol pitgamai*, cf. 5, 14 *pitgame nebuati*). The Targum on the Psalms is too late to be taken in evidence here, but it may be observed that, although *memra* occurs frequently in it, when it comes to translate Psalm 33, 6, 'By the word of the Lord (LXX τῷ λόγῳ τοῦ κυρίου) were the heavens made, and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth,' it renders 'word' not by *memra*, but by the common *milla*.<sup>10</sup> It may be added that *memra* is not employed, as seems sometimes to be imagined, as a standing circumlocution for 'God said,' or 'God spoke'; the Targums have no scruples about translating these phrases literally.<sup>11</sup>

Thus, wherever the 'word of the Lord' is the medium or instrumentality of revelation, or of communication to men, in Greek λόγος or ῥῆμα, the term employed for this medium in the Targums is not *memra*, but *pitgama*, or (seldom), as in the example cited above from Psalm 33, 6, *milla*.

Further, where the creative activity of God is spoken of in the Scriptures, the Targums do not represent this activity as mediated by his *memra*. Isa. 45, 12 is an apparent exception of the kind which in the proper sense of the dictum *probat regulam*. See also Deut. 33, 27, in a midrashic interpretation of the difficult words translated in our Bibles, 'underneath are the everlasting arms,' where Onkelos has, 'By his word (*memra*, fiat) the world was created.' The full importance of these observations will appear in the sequel, when we come to consider

the supposed relation of *memra* in the Targums to the Logos in Philo.<sup>12</sup>

With so much by way of introduction, we may turn to an examination of the meaning and use of *memra*.

*Memar* (definite, *memra*) is the Aramaic counterpart of the late Hebrew *ma'amar*, from *amar*, 'say.' The nouns signify something that is said, *dictum*, in the widest sense of the term. If what is said has authority behind it, it acquires from the context the connotation of command ('edict'). So the 'ten words' (*debarim*) of Exod. 34, 28, become for us the Ten Commandments; the world was created by ten commands (*ma'amerim*, 'fiats,' in Gen. 1), Abboth 5, 1, cf. Megillah 21b. In this sense *memar* is used in the Targums to interpret the Hebrew *peh* ('mouth') in idiomatic phrases, e.g. Gen. 45, 21, על פי פִּרְעָה, Targ. 'al *memra de-Par'oh*; the English versions, 'according to the commandment (edict) of Pharaoh.' The accounts of the tabernacle were rendered 'by order of Moses' ('al *memra de-Mosheh*, Exod. 38, 21); 'at the order of Aaron ('al *memar Aharon*) and his sons shall be all the service of the Gershonites,' (Num. 4, 27). 'Moses . . . died there in the land of Moab by the command of God' ('al *memra de-Y.*, Deut. 34, 5). *Memra* is used to render other expressions which imply command; for example, in Gen. 41, 44, Pharaoh says to Joseph, 'I am Pharaoh, and without thee (ובלעריך) shall no man lift up hand or foot in all the land of Egypt.' Onkelos renders, 'without thy command' (בר מִמִּירְךָ) shall no man raise his hand to lay hold of a weapon,' etc.

When men disobey the command (literally 'mouth') of God (*pi Yahweh*), or refuse obedience to it,<sup>13</sup> the Targum renders by *memra*; e.g. Deut. 1, 26, 'Ye refused to go up, and rebelled against the command (*memra*) of God.'<sup>14</sup> Similarly, when they are said to transgress the commandment of God;<sup>15</sup> e.g. Num. 14, 41, 'Ye transgress the commandment of God'; Onkelos, 'Ye transgress the decree of the edict of God' (*gezera memra de-Y.*)<sup>16</sup> So also with other verbs.<sup>17</sup> Num. 11, 20, 'Ye spurned the Lord who is in the midst of you'; 'Ye spurned the word (*memra*) of Y. whose presence (*shekinta*) abode among you.' Num. 21, 5, 'The people spoke against God and against



Moses'; 'The people murmured against the word (*memra*) of Y., and contended against Moses.' Deut. 32, 51, 'Because ye proved false to me in the midst of the Israelites'; 'Because ye proved false to my word' (*memri*).

On the other hand, to hearken to God, or to his voice, is in the Targums regularly to receive (implying, 'obey') the command (*memra*) of God; e.g. Lev. 26, 14, 'If ye do not hearken unto me,' etc.; Onkelos renders, 'If ye do not receive my command' (*memri*); Deut. 28, 15, 'If ye do not hearken to the voice (*qol*) of the Lord your God, by observing and doing all his commandments'; Onkelos, 'If you do not receive the command' (*memra*), etc. As the latter example shows, the Hebrew *qol*, 'voice,' when it implies a command, is rendered by *memra*; when this implication is not present, it is interpreted *qal memra*; e.g. Gen. 3, 8, Adam and Eve 'heard the voice of the Lord'; Onkelos, 'heard the sound of the word (*qal memra*) of Y. (the sound of Y. speaking), who was walking in the garden' (cf. 23, 10). So also Deut. 5, 21, 'We have heard his voice out of the midst of the fire'; Onkelos, *qal memreh*; and likewise in verses 25 and 26; cf. Deut. 4, 36, 'From heaven he made thee hear his voice'; Onkelos again, *qal memreh*.

In the phrase last quoted *memra* is not understood to imply command, and this is the case in a large number of passages to a consideration of which we now proceed. Notice may be directed first to places where the Bible narrates that God came to some one and spoke to him. Thus in Gen. 20, 3, 'God came to Abimelech in a dream of the night, and said to him'; Onkelos renders, 'A word (*memar*) from before Y. came to Abimelech in a dream of the night, and said to him.' Precisely so to Laban (Gen. 31, 24), and to Balaam (Num. 22, 9, with no mention of a dream). The paraphrase is natural; and there is additional reason for it in the fact that the recipients of these visits of God are not Israelites. Still stronger reason for paraphrase is given in Num. 23, 3, where Balaam bids Balak stand by his sacrifice, 'and I will go; perhaps the Lord will come to meet me,' and verse 4, 'The Lord met Balaam, and he said to Him, I have prepared the seven altars,' etc. Onkelos renders, 'Perhaps an oracle from before Y. (*memar min qadam*

Y.) will come to meet me, and the word (*pitgama*) that he shall show me, I will disclose to thee'; and in verse 4, 'And an oracle (*memra*) from before Y. met Balaam,' etc. In connection with this, verse 5 must be noted: 'Y. put the word (*pitgama*) in Balaam's mouth.'

Similar caution is evident, however, where God says that he will meet with the Israelites at the Tabernacle on stated occasions. Exod. 25, 22f., Onkelos, 'I will cause my word (*memri*, oracle) to meet thee there, and I will speak with thee from above the place of atonement (*kapporeth*), from between the two cherubs,' etc.; Exod. 29, 42, 43, Onkelos, 'I will cause my oracle (*memri*) to meet with you there, to speak with thee there; and I will cause my oracle to meet with the Israelites, and it (the Tabernacle) shall be sanctified by my glory.' In Exod. 19, 17, 'Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet God'; Onkelos, 'towards the oracle (*memra*) of God.' In these cases the paraphrase is natural, since in the first two the text and in the last the context make the revealing of the will of God the object of the meeting; but in both the motive for paraphrasing at all is plainly to avoid the imagination of a meeting between men and God in *propria persona*. For this there was explicit warrant in Deut. 4, 12: 'Y. spoke to you out of the midst of the fire; ye heard the sound of words (*gal pitgamin*), but a form ye did not see, only the sound (voice).' In Exod. 3, 18, where the Hebrew is, 'Say unto him (Pharaoh), The Lord, the God of the Hebrews, met us,' Onkelos has, 'appeared to us' (cf. vs. 16); see also 5, 3.<sup>18</sup> Note further Exod. 4, 12 (cf. 15), God says to Moses 'I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt speak'; Onkelos, 'my word (*memri*) shall be with thy mouth,' etc.

Here may perhaps most appropriately be introduced the scene between Jacob and Laban, Gen. 31, 49 f.: 'The Lord be on the lookout between me and thee when we are out of one another's sight. . . . God is witness between me and thee'; Onkelos in both verses, 'the word (*memra*) of Y.'

Natural paraphrase is to be seen also in such cases as Gen. 15, 6, Abraham 'believed in (put confidence in) God, and it was reckoned to him for righteousness'; Onkelos, 'He be-

lieved in the oracle (*memra*) of Y.,' namely, the promise contained in verses 1-5. Exod. 14, 31, When the Israelites saw the great work the Lord did on the Egyptians, they feared the Lord, 'and believed in the Lord and in his servant Moses'; Onkelos, 'in the oracle (*memra*) of Y. and in the prophecy of Moses his servant'; see also Num. 20, 12; Deut. 1, 32.

Where the Hebrew is literally, 'God said in his heart (mind),' that is, said to himself, Onkelos renders 'said in (or, by) his word' (*bememreh*: *dixit in dicto suo*); see Gen. 8, 21; cf. 6, 6. In the same way Onkelos interprets the enigmatic 'and God knew' of Exod. 2, 25, 'God said in his word to deliver them,' i.e. conceived the purpose. When God swears by himself, as in Gen. 22, 16, Onkelos has, 'by my word (*bememri*) I have established.'<sup>19</sup> So in Exod. 6, 8, 'I will bring you into the land which I lifted up my hand (swore) to give to Abraham,' etc.; cf. Num. 14, 30. The same formula is used when a man adjures another by God. Places in which it is said that God 'repented' (was sorry, changed his mind) are treated in various ways, according to the context. An instance of the use of *memra* is Gen. 6, 6, 'God repented that he had made man'; Onkelos, 'Y. turned in his word (*memreh*, thought, we should say) that he had made man.' Correspondingly in vs. 7. So also 1 Sam. 15, 11 and 35; Zech. 8, 14, Targum, 'my word (thought, *memri*) did not turn.'

Passages in which it is said that God will fight for the Israelites are paraphrased; e.g. Deut. 3, 22, 'For the Lord your God, he it is that fighteth for you'; Onkelos, 'For Y. your God, his word (*memreh*) fights for you'; cf. Deut. 1, 30. An interesting class of passages which seem to fall into the same category are those in which God promises to be with some one, or it is said that he was with some one. Thus in Exod. 3, 12, God says to Moses, 'I will be with thee'; Onkelos, 'My word (*memri*) will be in thy support.'<sup>20</sup> So in Gen. 21, 20, 'God will be with the lad' (Ishmael); Onkelos, 'the *memra* of Y. will be in the support of the lad.'<sup>21</sup> In such passages *memra* is probably the effective word which gives victory or protection with no need of such personal intervention as the phraseology of the original suggests. So also in punishment, e.g. Deut. 18, 19, Onkelos,

'the man who does not receive (obey) my word (*pitgami*) which he (the prophet) shall speak in my name, my word (*memri*, Heb. 'I') will demand satisfaction of him.' Compare also Deut. 4, 24, 'The Lord our God is a devouring fire'; 'Y. our God, his word (*memreh*) is a devouring fire'; cf. Deut. 9, 3.

Cognate in a measure to these are passages in which *memra* is put for the protecting 'hand' of God. Thus Exod. 33, 22, God says to Moses, 'I will cover my hand over thee till I have passed by'; Onkelos, 'I will extend protection by my word over thee.' The command of God, his expressed will, suffices for protection.<sup>22</sup> So also Num. 11, 23, 'Is the Lord's hand become short?' so that he is unable to provide food for the vast host of Israelites in the desert, as Moses in the preceding speech seems to imply; Onkelos, 'Is the word (*memra*, fiat) of God restrained,' hindered from effecting his purpose? With this compare the rendering of the same figure in Targum Isa. 50, 21, 'Is my might (*geburathi*) shrunk?' See also 59, 1.

Finally, attention should be directed to the introduction of *memra* when God speaks of a covenant between himself and men. Thus Gen. 9, 12, 'This is the sign of the covenant which I make between Me and you'; the Targum, 'between my word (*ben memri*) and you' (cf. vss. 13, 15, 16, 17); 17, 7, 'I establish my covenant between my word and thee' (cf. 17, 10); see also Exod. 31, 13, 17; Lev. 26, 46. Here 'the word' seems to serve only the purpose of a buffer, to avoid the impression that God enters into a covenant with men, so to speak, on equal terms. In so far as the promise or the requirement that is the subject of the covenant is expressed in the context, it is a not inappropriate buffer.

A different explanation is given by Maybaum, who regards *memri* in these cases, and in many of those adduced above under other heads, as equivalent to a reflexive pronoun, 'myself.' That *memar* was used in this way, especially in the late Targums on the Hagiographa, was remarked long ago by Buxtorf, who cites from a haggadic amplification in Targ. Ruth 3, 8: 'Paltiel bar Laish (2 Sam. 3, 15) was a pious man, who stuck a sword between himself (*ben memreh*) and Michal'; and adds 'Sic de Deo saepissime.' Similarly the Targum on

Job 7, 8, 'Thine eyes are upon me (*memri*, my person), and I am gone.' Other examples are cited by Lightfoot, *Horae Hebraicae*, on John 1, 1. Maybaum quotes from the so-called Targum Jonathan ben Uzziel on Gen. 9, 17: 'This is the sign of the covenant which I have established between me and all flesh that is upon the earth'; Jonathan, *ben memri uben memar kol bisra*, 'between myself (my person, we might say) and the person of every man.' The one known manuscript of this Targum<sup>23</sup> agrees with the printed editions in reading thus; but the expression is unparalleled, so that Ginsburger's suspicion of a blunder by a copyist does not seem an excess of scepticism. In any case an isolated phrase in this Targum is no key to the usage of the older Targums with which we are here concerned. Undoubtedly, if we had to translate idiomatically many of the passages in which *memra* is used, we should say 'myself, himself,' and the like; but inasmuch as the whole motive of the paraphrase is to avoid bringing God 'himself' into such immediate relation to the act or circumstance, it can hardly be supposed that the translator deliberately introduced a word which would be understood by his hearers to emphasize the relation. If he did not like to say simply that God did so and so, he would be still less inclined to say that God *himself* did it.

We have now surveyed the various uses of *memra* in the Targums on the Pentateuch and the Prophets. Instances might be multiplied under almost all the heads specified, but no class of cases has been passed over. Most of the uses of the word are easily explicable in their contexts in the light of the ends and methods of the synagogue interpretation. If analogy, or some subtlety of interpretation that escapes us, has sometimes introduced it on less obvious occasions, these are exceptions which need cause us neither surprise nor perplexity. The inquiry must set out from the common and plain uses; and our conclusions must be drawn from them, not from the residuum, if there be such, of unexplained occurrences. Proceeding in this way we find that God's *memra*<sup>24</sup> has sometimes the connotation of command — we might in imitation of the etymology say 'edict' — the expression of his will which is an effective force in nature and providence; sometimes it might

best be translated 'oracle,' the revelation of his will or purpose (not, however, a specific word of prophecy); sometimes it is the resolution of a metaphor for God's power, his protection, and the like. In many instances it is clearly introduced as a verbal buffer — one of many such in the Targums<sup>25</sup> — to keep God from seeming to come too close quarters with men and things; but it is always a buffer-word, not a buffer-idea; still less a buffer-person.

This would come out still more plainly if it were possible here to direct special attention to the singular phraseology of many of the passages in which *memra* comes in as a euphemism or as what I have called a buffer. In the context the translator habitually keeps as close as possible to the original, without adapting it to the new situation he has created by the introduction of his *memra*, and the result is often awkward and unidiomatic. It may be surmised that, as in the case of similar euphemisms and buffers introduced into the Hebrew text itself or the masoretic punctuation, the Targumists intentionally left the matter so that readers or hearers educated in the Scriptures would recognize the original expression or meaning through the veil cast over it. Such phenomena cannot, however, be exhibited in translation — in the translations above they are indeed frequently effaced in the interest of intelligible English — nor would they, even with explanation, show what they are except to readers familiar with both unsophisticated Aramaic diction and idiom and with the peculiarities of the translation-Aramaic of the Targums. To such readers, however, these phenomena must be among the most convincing evidence of the real character and motive of the *memra* passages.

The sum of the whole matter is that nowhere in these Targums is *memra* a 'being' of any kind or in any sense, whether conceived personally as an angel employed in communication with men, or as a philosophically impersonal created potency, as in Maimonides' theory; or God himself in certain modes of self-manifestation, which has been thought to be the opinion of R. Moses ben Nahman. The appearance of personality which in many places attaches to the *memra* is due solely to the fact that the phrase 'the *memra* of Y.,' or, with pronouns

referring to God, My, Thy, His, *memra*, is a circumlocution for 'God,' 'the Lord,' or the like, introduced out of motives of reverence precisely where God is personally active in the affairs of men; and the personal character of this activity necessarily adheres to the periphrasis. The very question whether the *memra* is personal or impersonal implies, from the philological point of view, a misunderstanding of the whole phenomenon; and every answer to a false question is by that very fact false.

These conclusions are strongly confirmed by the fact that *memra* is found only in the Targums; not in such Aramaic texts as are preserved in the Midrashim, nor in the voluminous Aramaic parts of the Talmuds, nor, so far as I am aware, in the Zohar. In other words, it is a phenomenon of translation, not a creature of speculation.<sup>26</sup>

The error is magnified to immensity when *memra* is connected with the Logos of Philo, whether it be supposed, as by Gfroerer, that the Palestinian mystical theology represented in the Targums (!) borrowed its intermediary being, *Memra*, from the Logos of Alexandrian 'theosophy,' or, contrariwise, that the Logos was derived and developed by the Alexandrians from the Palestinian *Memra*. The former theory involves a complete misunderstanding of what the Targums are and what they were made for, as well as a misinterpretation of the *memra* in them; the latter, besides a similar misinterpretation of *memra* in the Targums, involves a fundamental misunderstanding of what the Logos is in Philo, and what it is for.

It has been pointed out above (page 45f.) that in the Targums *memra* is not the term employed where the 'word of the Lord' is the medium or instrumentality of revelation, and that it is not the creative word in the cosmogony of Genesis or reminiscences of it.<sup>27</sup> It is needless to add that it is not the divine reason in the universe, nor the reason akin to the divine that is in every man. Since these things are exactly what the Logos is and does in Philo, the only *tertium comparationis* that would seem to be left is that the Greek λόγος is often properly understood and translated 'word,' and that *memra* also is commonly so translated.

It is an error of equal dimensions, when, by association with the Christian doctrine of the Logos and by abuse of a technical term of Christian theology, the Memra is described as 'an hypostasis.' For the modern reader 'hypostasis' has no use or meaning except that which it acquired in the controversies of the third and fourth centuries over the ontological relation of the Logos-Son to the Father; and to employ this term, with its denotation and all its trinitarian connotations, of the supposed personal, or quasi-personal, 'Memra' of the Targums, is by implication to attribute to the rabbis corresponding metaphysical speculations on the nature of the Godhead. But of speculation on that subject there is no trace either in the exoteric teaching of Judaism or in anything we know of its esoteric, theosophic, adventures into the divine mysteries.

Another paraphrastic expression upon which for our present purpose it is unnecessary to dwell is *yekara*, 'glory, majesty'.<sup>28</sup> One example out of many must suffice. In Exod. 24, 10, Moses and his companions, with the seventy elders of Israel, 'saw the God of Israel'; Onkelos, 'saw the glory (*yekar*) of the God of Israel.' The same interpretative periphrasis is used in Exod. 16, 17; Isa. 6, 1. Similarly, Gen. 17, 22, God ascended from Abraham; 'The glory of God ascended.' Exod. 20, 17, God has come to prove you; 'The glory of Y. has appeared to you.'<sup>29</sup>

Shekinah is another such word, properly Hebrew, but used in the Aramaic of the Targums as a borrowed word with Aramaic endings. The large part it has played in Christian discussion renders a brief statement of the usage necessary. Its origin and primitive significance are best seen where it paraphrases the verb (*shakan*; 'dwell, reside, abide') from which it is derived. Thus in Exod. 25, 8 God says, 'Let them make me a sanctuary that I may dwell among them'; the Targum has it, 'I will cause my presence (*shekinti*) to abide (or reside) among them.' Exod. 34, 6, 'And the Lord passed before him'; Targum, 'The Lord caused his presence (*shekinteh*) to pass before him.' In general, when God is said to be in a place or among his people, Onkelos makes it 'his presence' there; in



Deut. 12, 5; 11, 21, it is 'his presence' not 'his name' that God causes to abide in the place he chooses for a sanctuary. Contrariwise, when he leaves a place, he 'causes his presence to ascend' (to heaven, and depart from men); Hos, 5, 6; etc. Deut. 32, 19.

While *memra*, as has been observed above, is found only in the Targums, *shekinah* is very common in the Talmud and Midrash also. 'Often it is a mere metonymy for 'God,' as when R. Jose ben Halafta says: 'Never did the Presence (*shekinah*) descend to earth, nor did Moses and Elijah ascend to heaven; for it is written the heavens are the Lord's heavens, and the earth he has given to the children of men' (Psalm 115, 16).<sup>30</sup> Inasmuch as the same Rabbi elsewhere says that God is not in any place, perhaps this is his meaning here. It has also been suggested that the words are meant by inference to contradict Christian teaching on the incarnation and the resurrection (Bacher, *Agada der Tannaiten*, II, 185). In the parallel in the Mekilta, *kabod*, 'glory,' is used where the Talmud has *shekinah*. The doctrine of R. Jose seemed so paradoxical in the face of such explicit texts as Exod. 19, 20; Zech. 14, 4, on the one hand, and Exod. 19, 3; 2 Kings 2, 11, on the other, that some ingenuity had to be exercised to save it.

Where the omnipresence of God is asserted, the word used is 'the Presence' (*shekinah*). The Lord was revealed in the thorn bush to teach that there is no place on earth void of the Presence; it is the Presence which, like the sea flooding the cave, filled the tabernacle with its radiance, while the world outside was no less full of it. Successive sins of mankind beginning with Adam caused the Presence to be taken up from earth and from one heaven to another to the seventh and most remote; a succession of righteous men from Abraham to Moses brought it down again, stage by stage, to earth once more.<sup>31</sup> In a later work ten descents of the Presence to the world are enumerated, from the first in the Garden of Eden to the last, still future, in the days of Gog and Magog; the Scripture proofs alleged are all verses in which God or (the Lord) comes down to earth (Gen. 11, 5, etc.), or is upon the earth, as in Gen. 3, 8; Zech. 14, 4.<sup>32</sup>

In a special sense God dwelt in the tabernacle and later in

the temple. When he took up his abode in them a cloud enveloped the tabernacle, or filled the temple, and thus veiled the glory of the Lord, too deadly bright for mortal eyes, which filled them.<sup>33</sup> The association of the presence of God with a manifestation of his glory and of the latter with light led to the conception of the Presence (*shekinah*) as light.

All worship demands a *praesens numen*, and however men may entertain the idea of the omnipresence of God, they find it difficult to realize his specific presence in the particular place where they gather for religious service without some aid to faith or imagination. This is the origin and meaning of the teaching that wherever ten men (the quorum of the synagogue) are met for prayer, there is the Presence.<sup>34</sup> How many 'Presences' are there then? a caviller asked. R. Gamaliel (II) answered by asking a slave, How does the sun get into that man's house? The sun shines, he replied, on all the world. If the sun, one of the millions of suns that are before the blessed God, shines on all the earth, how much more the Presence of God! (Sanhedrin 39a.)

R. Isaac, a pupil of Johanan and a favorite homilist of the third century, says: 'Whenever Israelites prolong their stay in the synagogues and schools, God makes his Presence stay with them.'<sup>35</sup> The following is also handed down from Isaac: 'Whence do we learn that God is found in the synagogue building?' Because it is said, 'God standeth in the congregation of God' (Psalm 82, 1). And whence that when ten are praying together the Presence is with them? Because it is said, 'God standeth in the congregation of God' (*ibid.*).<sup>36</sup> And whence that when three are sitting as judges the Presence is with them? Because it is written, 'In the midst of the judges (*elohim*) he will judge' (Psalm 82, 1b). And whence that when two are sitting and studying the Law the Presence is with them? Because it is written, 'Then those who fear the Lord spoke one to the other, and the Lord hearkened and heard,' etc. (Mal. 3, 16). And whence that even when one is sitting and studying the Law the Presence is with him? Because it is written, 'In every place where I cause mention to be made of my name, I will come unto thee and bless thee' (Exod. 20, 21).<sup>37</sup>

In all these cases the Presence (*shekinah*) is not something that takes the place of God, but a more reverent way of saying 'God.' Similarly Christians speak of God's being present in their religious assemblies or of the presence of the Holy Spirit, without intending any difference of meaning, notwithstanding the personality of the Holy Spirit, and indeed without reflection at all. This use of the phrase 'the Holy Spirit,' ultimately derived from the Old Testament, was, it should be remembered, long established in Christian speech and literature before the dawn of hypostatic speculations.

In Jewish literature, also, 'the Holy Spirit' frequently occurs in connections in which 'the Presence' is elsewhere employed, without any apparent difference of meaning; but the fact that the words are within a certain range interchangeable is far from warranting the inference that the *shekinah* and the *ruh ha-qodesh* were identified in thought. Thus it is said in the Tanhuma (ed. Buber, Shemoth 10, f. 3a) that until the temple was destroyed the *shekinah* was placed in the temple ('The Lord is in his holy temple,' Psalm 11, 4); after the destruction of the temple, the *shekinah* ascended to heaven ('The Lord, in heaven is his throne,' *ibid.*). With this compare Koheleth Rabbah on Eccl. 12, 7 (end): 'When Jeremiah saw that Jerusalem was destroyed, and the temple burned, and Israel gone into exile, and the Holy Spirit taken up,' etc. The interchange is especially frequent in reference to persons to whom the Spirit or the Presence comes, or on whom it rests. A good example is Tos. Sotah 13, 3 compared with Bab. Sotah 48b; Sanhedrin 11a. In the former the voice from heaven declares that one of the company is worthy to have the Holy Spirit rest upon him; the Talmud has 'the *shekinah*.' On the other hand, revelation, or inspiration, the chief function of the Holy Spirit in Judaism, is, so far as I know, never attributed to the Presence (*shekinah*). Among the five things which were in the first temple but were lacking in the second, Yoma 21b includes both the Shekinah and the Holy Spirit. This list is evidently padded and confused. What seems to be the soundest form of the tradition counts the five things: the fire (that was kindled from heaven), the ark, the priestly oracle (Urim and Thum-

mim), the anointing oil, and the Holy Spirit (the spirit of prophecy). So Jer. Taanith ii, 1, f. 65a; Jer. Makkoth ii, 7, f. 32a; cf. Jer. Horaioth iii, 2, f. 47c end. The 'Shekinah' in Bab. Yoma *l. c.* is intrusive, perhaps a doublet to the Holy Spirit. It does not seem to be found in any of the parallels in the Midrashim (Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah 8 (on verse 9); Tanhuma ed. Buber, Behealotka 11 (f. 25b, top); Bemidbar Rabbah 15, 10, etc.

Like *memra*, *shekinah* acquires what semblance of personality it has solely by being a circumlocution for God in contexts where personal states or actions are attributed to him.

## NOTES. — I. MEMRA

1. The Targums were generally supposed to represent a traditional exegesis older than the Christian era.

2. For a single example, M. Kähler, 'Christologie, Schriftlehre,' Protestantische Real-Encyclopädie, 3 ed. iv, 7: Eigentlich ist dem nachkanonischen Judentum die Umsetzung der anschaulichen Ausdrücke für das Walten Gottes in der Welt, namentlich auch seines offenbarenden Wirkens, in gewissermassen selbstständige Werkzeuge Gottes; das schöpferische und offenbarende Wort wird im Memra hypostasiert, die Gnadengegenwart Gottes bei seinem Volk in der Schechina; dazu kommt bei den Rabbinen noch der Metatron; alle diese Mittelwesen gleichen den Engeln und sind, wie auch der Geist Gottes, geschaffen.

3. 'Christian Writers on Judaism,' Vol. XIV (1921), pp. 227, 233, and elsewhere.

4. See L. Ginzberg, 'Anthropomorphism,' Jewish Encyclopedia I, 621-625, and the literature there noted.

5. Moreh Nebukim, Part i, cc. 27-28.

6. Nor created *ad hoc*. All miraculous events that occur at a given moment of time seemingly at variance with the order of nature were really constituted part of that order at the creation of the world. 'The Eight Chapters,' c. 8 (ed. J. I. Gorfinkle, New York, 1912, p. 46, and *ibid.* translation, pp. 90 f., with the references there given in a note); Maimonides, Commentary on Mishnah, Aboth 5, 6; Moreh, Part ii, c. 29. Cf. Munk, Le Guide des Égarés, I, p. 296 n.

7. For brevity and simplicity I have restricted myself to examples from Onkelos and the Targums on the Prophets, which had an authority not conceded to the rest. Whatever peculiarities the Palestinian Targums present, Ginsburger's investigation proves that in them also there is no personification of *memra* or *shekinta*, to say nothing of 'hypostasis.' In the transliteration of Hebrew and Aramaic I have not marked the quantity of the vowels. Readers who know the language do not need this assistance any more than in Latin; those who do not will be none the wiser for it.

8. 'In the Targums anthropomorphic expressions are put aside altogether.' Oesterley and Box, Religion and Worship of the Synagogue, p. 153.

9. In translating from the Targums, I employ 'Y.' where they have the customary abbreviation for the name.

10. *Milla* sometimes stands in the Palestinian Targums where Onkelos has *pitgama*. The variation has no significance.

11. 'The *memra* of Y. said,' and the like, occurs only in Palestinian Targums, and apparently with especial frequency in the Fragmentary Targum. See Ginsburger, p. 267f.

12. See below, p. 54.

13. מרה את פי יהוה. English versions often, 'rebel against the commandment of the Lord.'

14. See also 1 Sam. 12, 14, 15; 1 Kings 13, 21, 26, etc.

15. עבר את פי יהוה.

16. Num. 22, 18; 24, 13; 1 Sam. 15, 24, etc. For the expression cf. the Targum on Isa. 40, 5; 58, 14, 'for by the edict (*memra*) of Y. it is thus decreed' (*gezir ken*). See also Num. 14, 35.

17. מעל, דבר ב', מאם.

18. Compare the shifts of the Greek and Latin versions in Exod. 3, 18 and 5, 3. They translate קרא, 'call.'

19. From motives of reverence Onkelos uses this verb for the oath of God; when men swear he employs the usual Aramaic verb.

20. בסערך, with a buffer preposition.

21. See also Gen. 21, 22, 23; 26, 28; 28, 20; 31, 5, 42; 39, 21, 23, etc.

22. A more drastic figure is similarly paraphrased in Ezek. 16, 8, 'I spread my skirt over thee'; Targum, 'I extended protection by my word (*memri*) over thee.'

23. Edited by M. Ginsburger, Pseudo-Jonathan . . . nach der Londoner Handschrift (Brit. Mus. add. 27,031). Berlin, 1903.

24. It is to be observed that *memra* does not occur without a genitive — 'the word of the Lord,' 'my word,' etc., or a circumlocution for the genitive, 'a *memra* from before the Lord.' 'The Memra,' 'the Word,' is not found in the Targums, notwithstanding all that is written about it by authors who have not read them.

25. The commonest — and in many phrases awkwardest — of these is קדם, 'before, in front of.' For examples see Ginsburger, pp. 278–280, or the Lexicons.

26. For this reason alone the attempt to elucidate *memra* by the *dibbur* of the Midrash is out of place, even if the usage of *dibbur* were not misstated.

27. Consequently, the theory that derives the Logos-Word of John 1, 1–5 straight from the Palestinian *memra* is fallacious.

28. *Yekar* is elsewhere the ordinary translation of the Hebrew *kabod*, in Greek δόξα.

29. For other examples, see Maybaum, p. 49 f, Ginsburger, p. 277 f. In similar cases Onkelos sometimes has *memra*, sometimes *shekinta*.

30. Bar. Sukkah 5a (top); cf. Mekilta on Exod. 19, 20 (ed. Friedmann f. 65b).

31. Bereshit Rabbah 19, 7 and parallels.

32. Aboth de-R. Nathan 34, 5.

33. Exod. 29, 34 f., 1 Kings 8, 10 f., cf. Isa. 6, 1–4.

34. Sanhedrin 39a.

35. Pesikta ed. Buber, Shemini Asereth, f. 193a–b; Pesikta Rabbathi ed. Friedmann (Supplement), f. 202b. For the exegetical derivation see the editors' notes, and Bacher, Agada der paläst. Amoräer II, 220 f. n. To the same homilist Song of Songs 2, 8 f. suggests God's springing from synagogue to synagogue and from school to school to bless the Israelites (Pesikta Rabbathi, f. 72a; less complete text, Pesikta ed. Buber f. 48b).

36. אלהים נצב בערת אל. In the first deduction ערת אל is taken in the sense of אל מועדי in Psalm 74, 8; the second takes ערה as 'congregation,' which consists of at least ten men (general rule based on Num. 14, 27). See Bacher, Agada der paläst. Amoräer II, 221.

37. Berakot 6a. On Exod. 20, 21 cf. Onkelos, 'In every place where I make my presence (*shekinti*) to rest, thither will I send my blessing unto thee and will bless thee.'

## II. METATRON

In the foregoing there is nothing novel either in the facts or the conclusions, and the only reason for working over the ground again and presenting the results here is that the scholars whom it most concerns to know about the subject almost universally ignore the previous investigations, and are content to take their facts and opinions directly or indirectly from Gfroerer and Weber. In the case of Metatron, on the other hand, there appeared to be room for a new philological and historical study of the whole problem, such as will occupy the rest of this article.

Christian attention was first directed to Metatron by cabalistic studies, and it was from the Cabala and commentators who interpreted the Old Testament in the spirit and sense of the Cabala that Christian theologians got the notions about him with which subsequent investigation has generally set out. Metatron was for them an angel of the highest order, or a mysterious being of higher than angelic rank, who was in a peculiar sense a mediator and intercessor with God. Hermann Witsius (d. 1708) was tempted to surmise that even the name Metatron itself might be a deflected form of the Latin *mediator*, 'nam qui Mediatoris sunt, ea huic Angelo adtribuere solent.'<sup>1</sup> If, instead of starting with cabalistic mysteries, or mystifications, the investigation begins at the other end, there will be a better prospect of finding out who or what manner of thing Metatron was.

The oldest occurrence of the word is in Sifrè on Deut. 32, 49 (§ 338), that is, in a Palestinian work the final redaction of which falls early in the third century, but which in this part is a Midrash of the school of Ishmael three quarters of a century earlier.<sup>2</sup> Moses is bidden to ascend Mount Nebo in the land of Moab opposite Jericho, 'and see the land of Canaan, which I am going to give the Israelites as a possession.' On this R. Eliezer comments: 'With his finger he (God) was a *metatron* to Moses<sup>3</sup> and showed him the whole land of Israel; so far the boundaries of Ephraim; so far the boundaries of Manasseh.'<sup>4</sup> According to R. Joshua, Moses saw it for himself; God gave

him such powerful eyesight that he saw from one end of the world to the other.<sup>5</sup> The word *meṭaṭron* was explained by R. Moses ben Naḥman and Eshtori Parḥi as 'one who shows the way,' a guide, and a corresponding gloss has found its way into the text of Sifrè.<sup>6</sup>

Another occurrence in a Palestinian Midrash is in Bereshith Rabbah 5, 4 (on Gen. 1, 9): 'R. Levi said, Some interpreters interpret with Ben Azzai and Ben Zoma,<sup>7</sup> that the voice of God was made a *meṭaṭron*<sup>8</sup> over the waters, according to the words, 'The voice of the Lord was over the waters' (Psalm 29, 3). The question, as appears from the preceding context, was how the waters found their way into the ocean when God gathered them together in one place; the answer, The voice of the Lord guided them. The interpretation of Ben Azzai is cited (independently of Bereshith Rabbah) by R. Berechiah in Midrash Tehillim on Psalm 93, 3 (§ 5, end); 'The voice of God was a *meṭaṭor* before them.' The Aruk<sup>9</sup> quotes from Midrash Yelammedenu on Deut. 2, 31 (Behold I have begun to deliver Sihon and his land before thee): 'If that gives thee concern, I am thy *meṭaṭor*. Do not wonder at these words; am I not hereafter going to be made a *meṭaṭor* before an uncircumcised man, Cyrus, as it is written, 'I will go before thee, and make the crooked places straight,' etc. (Isa. 45, 2); I am going to go before a woman, before Deborah and Barak, as it is said, 'Is not the Lord gone out before thee' (Judges 4, 14).

Besides this passage, which is not preserved in our recensions of the Midrash Tanḥuma, the Aruk cites in this sense, from the same source at the end of the Parashah Ki Tissa (on Exod. 34, 27), where, in answer to the intercession of Moses for the people after the sin of the golden calf, God recounts his ill-requited goodness to Israel: 'And not only that, but in the desert I go before them as *meṭaṭor* — 'The Lord goeth before them by day' (Exod. 13, 21) — levelling down for them the heights and levelling up the depressions' (cf. Isa. 40, 3 f.).<sup>10</sup> In the same sense, and with the same Scripture reference, we find in a later Midrash on Exod. 23, 20, 'Behold, I send an angel,' etc.:<sup>11</sup> 'God said to Israel, When you were worthy of it, I myself was made a messenger (*shalih*) for you, as I did for you in the



desert, as it is said, The Lord went before them by day (Exod. 13, 21); but now that ye are not worthy, I turn you over to a messenger (*shalih*), as it is said, Behold, I send an angel,' etc. (Exod. 23, 20.).<sup>12</sup> At the plea of Moses (Exod. 33, 12 ff.), however, the captain (*sar*, cf. Josh. 5, 4, and below, p. 65) did not actually assume authority over them till the death of Moses. Here God going before Israel in the desert is called *shalih*, precisely as in the passage first quoted from the Tanhuma (Yelammedenu) he is called *meṭaṭor*; the two words are equivalent in sense. A third example given in the Aruk, also from Yelammedenu, is from the Parashah Balak (on Num. 22, 36: Balak heard that Balaam was come), 'Showing that they had sent *meṭaṭorin* (plur.) before him.'<sup>13</sup> From these passages R. Nathan gathers that the idea in *meṭaṭor* is, 'preceding, going on before.'<sup>14</sup> The substitution in our texts of the Tanhuma on Num. *l. c.* of *sheluhim* (lit., persons sent on a mission or with a message, the Hebrew word represented in the New Testament by *ἀπόστολος*) is a correct interpretation from the context. In all the passages thus far cited *meṭaṭron* or *meṭaṭor* — the forms interchange in parallels and variants — is an appellative; and except in the last it is God himself (or his finger or his voice) that is the *meṭaṭron* or *meṭaṭor*. In all the context requires some such general sense as 'one who leads or shows the way, one who goes in advance.'<sup>15</sup>

In the Babylonian Talmud *Meṭaṭron* is an angel. The passages in which he appears are few, and it will not take us too far to examine them all. In the first of these (Sanhedrin 38b) R. Naḥman (ben Isaac) narrates a controversy between R. Idi (probably a Palestinian teacher of that name in the latter part of the fourth century) and a heretic (*min*), as an example of the right way to answer such cavils. The heretic quoted Exod. 24, 1, 'And to Moses he said, Ascend unto the Lord,' etc. Why not, Ascend unto Me? The Rabbi replied: It means *Meṭaṭron*,<sup>16</sup> whose name is like the name of his master,<sup>17</sup> as the Scripture says, 'for My name is in him.' 'If that is so, you should worship him.'<sup>18</sup> 'It is written, Do not exchange me for him.' 'What does it mean then by the words, 'He will not pardon your transgression?''<sup>19</sup> 'In solemn truth! we did not

accept him even as a precursor,<sup>20</sup> for it is written, 'And he (Moses) said to Him, If Thy presence (פניך) go not (with us), lead us not up hence' (Exod. 33, 15). *Meṭaṭron* is here identified with the angel whom God proposed to send before the Israelites to watch over and protect them in the desert and lead them to the place God had prepared for them (Exod. 23, 1-4; 32, 34), but whose offices Moses declined — unless God personally accompanied the expedition, he was unwilling to set out on it. That Moses did thus refuse to set out under the conduct of an angel is deduced in the *Tanḥuma* from the same texts. The same angel was later sent to Joshua (Josh. 5, 13 ff.); he announces himself as the captain of the Lord's host (ibid. vs. 14), and says: 'Twice have I come to bring Israel into its inheritance. It was I who came in the days of Moses thy master, and he rejected me, and was not willing that I should go; now I am come again.'<sup>21</sup> Substantially the same is repeated in later compilations;<sup>22</sup> see also *Bereshith Rabbah* 97, 3.

From this survey of the usage of *meṭaṭor* and *meṭaṭron* we may proceed to the question of etymology. That מַטְטֹר is nothing but the Latin word *metator* written in Hebrew letters was recognized long ago by both Jewish and Christian scholars, and *meṭaṭron* was rightly taken to be only another form of the same word.<sup>23</sup> Thus R. Moses ben Naḥman (d. ca. 1270), in his latest and greatest work, the commentary on the *Pentateuch*, on Exod. 12, 12, identifies the envoy (*shalih*) from God to accomplish all that God did in the land of Canaan, with 'the great angel who on that account (*sc.* as being an envoy) is called *meṭaṭron*; for the meaning of the latter word is 'one who shows the way,' as we read in *Sifrè*, (etc. adducing the passages from *Sifrè* and *Yelammedenu* quoted above), and so in many places. And I have heard that 'messenger' in Latin is *metator*.'<sup>24</sup> The same derivation is given by Elias Levita in his glossary entitled 'Tisbe' (1542): 'I have heard from the cardinal, my pupil,<sup>25</sup> that *metator* in Latin is a messenger (*shalih*), and this is perhaps the explanation.' More exactly, Benjamin Mussafia, in a supplementary note to the article in the *Aruk* (ed. Amsterdam, 1655), from his own knowl-

edge of Latin, writes: '*Metator* in Latin is an officer who goes in advance of an army to select for the soldiers a halting place and quarters for the night.' Similarly another learned lexicographer, David Cohen de Lara, in his '*Ir David*,'<sup>26</sup> a glossary of the foreign words found in rabbinical writings. He defines *metator* in Hebrew and Latin as a military 'quarter-master' (its meaning in Roman law), and adds the Spanish equivalent, '*aposenador*.'

This was also the common opinion of the learned among Christians in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The most complete exposition of this, with an almost exhaustive array of the evidence, is given by Danz, where also other theories are discussed.<sup>27</sup>

Danz presented at length the use and meaning of *metator* in Latin.<sup>29</sup> Thus Vegetius gives the military definition: '*Metator dicitur, qui praecedens locum castris deligit.*' Another writer on the military art describes *metatores* as '*Antegestores, qui ante agmen eunt, et loca castris metandis idonea deligunt, et viam, qua duci exercitus commode possit, vident.*' From Christian authors<sup>30</sup> are quoted Optatus, *Contra Donatistas*, iii: *Cum ante venturos milites metatores, ut fieri adsolet, mitterentur.* Cyprian, *Epist.* 6, 4, exhorts his readers to follow the courageous example of the presbyter and confessor Rogatianus, *qui . . . primum hospitium in carcere prae-paravit et metator quodammodo vester nunc quoque vos antecedit.* See also Cyprian, *Epist.* 22, 1: *Nam tu Deo volente ipsum anguem majorem metatorem Antichristi . . . deruisisti.* Ambrose, *Exameron* v, 10: *Quis imperator piscibus praeceptum dedit, quis doctor hanc tribuit disciplinam, qui metatores itinera disponunt, qui duces iter dirigunt, ut nullius desit occursum?*<sup>31</sup>

*Metator* thus had an evolution closely parallel to the English 'harbinger';<sup>32</sup> 'One sent on before to purvey lodgings for an army, a royal train, etc.; . . . a pioneer who prepares the way. One that goes before and announces the approach of some one; a forerunner.'<sup>33</sup> And if 'harbinger' were not in modern English so bookish and so predominately figurative, it would be the best rendering for the Hebrew *meṭaṭor*, *meṭaṭron*.

The latest authors to deal with the subject at length, Oesterley and Box, 'cannot agree with the writer on this subject in the Jewish Encyclopedia [Ludwig Blau] when he says that 'the derivation from the Latin *metator* (= 'guide') is doubtless correct.' They have two objections: *First*, it is Elisha ben Abuyah who first refers to Metatron under this name; the belief regarding Metatron must consequently have been much earlier than his time (first half of the second century); so early a date makes it improbable that the word is derived from the Latin, for Roman influence upon Jewish literature is not likely to have been strong enough to lead Jewish teachers to adopt a Latin word; a Latin derivation is all the less likely because the word first occurs in the Babylonian Talmud. *Second*, in Latin *metator* means 'divider,' or 'measurer,'<sup>34</sup> not 'guide.' 'It would be difficult to point to any instance of the Latin word being used in this sense.' As regards the latter point it is sufficient to refer to the 'instances' quoted above, which are not 'difficult to point to,' inasmuch as since the end of the seventeenth century they, with others, e.g. from the codes and the civil lawyers, have stood in the dictionary to which a scholar would first go with such a question, and are all cited in full by Danz. The first objection is equally baseless. That 'it is Elisha ben Abuyah who first refers to Metatron under this name,' is a complication of errors.<sup>35</sup> The story about the origin of Elisha's heresy will be discussed later. Suffice it here to say that in that story Elisha does not 'refer to Metatron under this name' at all. That the occurrence of the word in a Babylonian story of uncertain date *about* Elisha is proof that the word and idea were current in the age and environment of the hero of the story<sup>36</sup> is a kind of inference that might have curious results: for example, the translated Enoch is called Metatron, therefore the word and the idea are older than the flood. And finally, the probability or improbability of Latin words having found their way into rabbinical Hebrew or the vernacular Aramaic is not to be decided by what the authors deem antecedently probable, but by reading the literature; in default of which the special glossaries to words borrowed from Greek and Latin might profitably be consulted — Krauss,

for example. In the particular case before us it should be observed that from the time of the Roman occupation of Syria Latin military terms — and such *metator* is — for which there was no exact equivalent in Hebrew or Aramaic were adopted with especial frequency. The authors must have forgotten that in the Gospels not only Jesus but the poor demoniac use the Latin *legio*.

The derivation from the Latin *metator* did not yield a sense that seemed adequate to the rank and functions of Metatron in mystical and cabalistic writings; and, assuming that the name must have been coined to express his exalted station in that literature, scholars sought for etymologies corresponding to their interpretation of the figure.<sup>37</sup>

In cabalistic vein R. Bahya ben Asher (Behai) in his commentary on Exod. 23, 21,<sup>38</sup> finds in the word Metatron two meanings, 'lord' and 'messenger,' deriving the former from the rabbinical (really Latin) *matrona*<sup>39</sup> and the latter from the Greek, in which a messenger is called *mentator* (sic!).<sup>40</sup> For good measure, he offers a third derivation for a piece of the word: *maṭrat* stands in the Targum for Hebrew *shemirah* ('keeping, protection'), 'and because he is the keeper of the world he is called the keeper of Israel.' By inverting the process, he deduces circularly from the etymology that Metatron is the lord of all beings of lower rank, for all the host above and below are in his authority and under his power; and he is an envoy (messenger) of Him who is over him, and higher than he is He who gave him dominion over the universe and appointed him lord of His house and manager of all His possessions (cf. Gen. 24, 2). The ם in the middle of his name are numerically 18, and thus equivalent to ן ('living'). It is no wonder that Christian scholars found in Bahya's Metatron all they were looking for.

The etymology which in recent times has enjoyed the most approbation derives the name from *μετά* and *θρόνος*. The merit — whatever it is — of being the inventor of this pun is frequently attributed to some modern who has repeated it without due credit to his predecessors.<sup>41</sup> The first to propose it, so far as I know, was J. H. Maius, Professor at Giessen, in

his *Synopsis Theologiae Judaicae* (1698), p. 72. He submits it to the judgment of the learned as a modest conjecture, 'an non commodius longe ac vulgo fit (*sc.* from *metator*) ex Graecis vocibus *μετά* et *θρόνον* deduci queat, ut innuatur Angelus *σύνθρονος* Dei, seu ejusdem throni, majestatis et gloriae cum Deo Patre participi,' etc. Hengstenberg<sup>42</sup> cites Maius, and, of more recent authors, Joh. Fried. Meyer, 'Blätter für höhere Wahrheit' (Sammlung iv (1822), p. 168).<sup>43</sup> Hengstenberg rejects the derivation for the very good reason that *μετάθρονος* is not even a Greek word. Gfroerer, however, into whose Alexandrian theosophy in Palestine such a divine assessor fitted as well as into the old orthodoxy, and who was not deterred by philological scruples, accepted the etymology; Metatron is the being who is *μετὰ τὸν θρόνον θεοῦ*. Inasmuch as the rabbis adopted into their vocabulary both *πάρεδρος* and *συγκάθεδρος*, and if these did not satisfy them, could as easily have borrowed *σύνθρονος*, it is not clear why they should have taken the trouble to invent *μετάθρονος*. Modern authors who maintain this derivation are bound to attempt some explanation of the second *t* in *metatron* — for Greek *theta* in that age we should expect Hebrew *tau*.

The last named difficulty is escaped by another etymological figment; *metatron* is *μετά + τύραννος* (*μετατύραννον*), a factitious word which is defined, 'one who stands next in rank to the ruler.'<sup>44</sup> It is a further objection — if any other is needed — that in Hebrew the borrowed words *τύραννος*, *τυραννία* seem to be uniformly spelled מִיר.

Another etymology, about the priority in which there seems to be some rivalry, discovers in מיטטרון (pronounce, Mittron) the name of the god Mithra. Its most notable advocate was Alexander Kohut.<sup>45</sup> Hamburger (*Real-Encyclopaedie für Bibel und Talmud*, II, 781) enumerates several predecessors, beginning with Fried. Nork,<sup>46</sup> 'Brahminen und Rabbinen,' 1836. The honor seems to belong, however, to a Christian scholar, Heinrich Ed. Schmieder, who propounded the theory in an excursus to his 'Nova Interpretatio loci Paulini Galat. iii. 19–20' (1826; pp. 41–48).<sup>47</sup> Schmieder briefly recites and despatches the older attempts on the word as he found them

in Danz, as well as Meyer's *μετάθρονος*, and then proposes his own solution: Mittron or Mettron is Mithras. He tries to show that the Jews were capable of disguising the name in so remarkable a manner — which, in view of other achievements, can not be unqualifiedly denied — but is chiefly moved by the remarkable agreement he finds between the character and functions of Mithras and the Jewish 'Mittron,' dwelling particularly, as might be expected, on Mithras as *μεσίτης*,<sup>48</sup> 'mediator,' on which aspect of his nature Creuzer had expatiated. Schmieder then develops with considerable ingenuity the theory that these Persian doctrines were introduced and cultivated among the Jews by the Essenes, comparing the teachings and observances of the latter as described by Philo and Josephus with accounts of Persian customs.

Retracing our steps from this excursion into the vagaries of etymology, two passages in the Babylonian Talmud remain to be examined. One of these is the story about Elisha ben Abuyah to which allusion has already been made. A second century tradition (*baraita*) preserved in both Talmuds,<sup>49</sup> tells, in a few obscure words, of four eminent teachers of theosophical leanings in the generation before Hadrian — Ben Azzai, Ben Zoma, 'Aher' (Elisha ben Abuyah), and Akiba — who 'entered Paradise,'<sup>50</sup> and of the disastrous effect what they saw there had on the first three: one of them gazed and died; another gazed and was stricken with madness; Aher gazed and 'cut down the plants'; Akiba alone came off unscathed. The cryptic phrase, 'cut down the plants,' is explained in the Jerusalem Talmud as meaning that he visited the schools and persuaded youths to abandon the study of the law, and take to such trades as those of builders, carpenters, hunters, tailors. The 'plants' are thus the young scholars in the rabbinical seminaries. In the Babylonian Talmud a different story is told: 'Aher saw (in Paradise) Metatron, to whom permission had been given to be seated while he recorded the good deserts of Israelites. Whereupon Aher exclaimed, We have been taught that in heaven no one (except God) sits . . . . Can it be that there are two supreme powers!' Metatron was chastised with sixty lashes of fire<sup>51</sup> for having given occasion for such an error by

not rising; he was directed to erase from the record the good deeds of Aḥer; and a heavenly voice was heard saying, 'Return (repent), ye apostate children (Jer. 3, 14) — except Aḥer!' <sup>52</sup>

The remaining mention of Metatron in the Babylonian Talmud is in Abodah Zarah 3b, according to which among God's regular occupations in heaven is to give religious instruction for three hours — the last quarter of the day — to children whose early death has deprived them of opportunity to study the Torah on earth.<sup>53</sup> If it be asked, Who teaches them in the earlier part of the day? it may be answered, Metatron. In both these places Metatron has a special office in heaven in relation to Israelites, the recorder of their good works, the teacher of children who died in infancy. These are offices that might be performed by any angel appointed to them, and there is nothing in either context to suggest that Metatron was a being of a different nature or one who stood in a peculiar relation to God; nor that he was in any sense a 'mediator' between God and Israel. An examination of these passages — the only places where the name occurs — shows that the beginnings of the Metatron mythology, if so it should be called, in the Babylonian Talmud are extremely modest.<sup>54</sup>

A higher rank and larger functions are attributed to Metatron by recent writers on the subject on the ground of certain titles which are said to be given him. Thus Weber: 'In Hullin 60a and Yebamot 16b he bears the name שר העולם, Prince of the World; he represents God's sovereignty (*Herrscherstellung*) in the world.' Oesterley and Box, confidently following Weber, refer to 'two passages, one from the Babylonian and one from the Jerusalem Talmud, in which Metatron bears the title of Prince of the World; a title which more probably implies that he is the representative of God in the world.'<sup>55</sup> As I pointed out in a former article (Vol. XIV, p. 237), Weber apparently fell into his error by a careless reading of Levy, Chaldäisches Wörterbuch II, 231, who refers to the Tosafot on the two places cited, where is found, however, not an identification of the *sar ha-'olam* with Metatron, but a discussion of a difficulty which Rabbenu Tam (d. 1171) discovered in certain



inconsistent expressions about Metatron in two mediaeval synagogue hymns. The question is, how could Metatron, according to one of them the translated Enoch who from flesh was turned to fire, be the *sar ha-'olam* with whom the other seems to identify him, when according to Hullin *l.c.* the *sar ha-'olam* sounded the praises of God at the creation (Psalm 104, 31), generations before Enoch was born? The outcome does not concern us; the important thing is that if there had been any Talmudic authority for the identification of the *sar ha-'olam* with Metatron there would have been no room for the discussion. It may be observed also that in Sanhedrin 94a, *sar ha-'olam* is interpreted by Rashi simply as an angel to whom the whole world is committed, without any hint of identification. The Responsum quoted below (note 73) identifies the angel of Gen. 48, 16 and Isa. 63, 9 with Metatron 'whom the rabbis call the prince of the presence,' but makes no mention of the greater title, 'prince of the world.'

*Sar ha-panim*, a frequent title of Metatron in post-Talmudic literature, is most simply explained as a breviloquence, the prince, or chief, of the class who are called 'angels of the presence,' that is those who have immediate access to God's presence, like the principal ministers of a monarch who customarily attend in his presence. Cabalistic speculation, however, made it 'the prince who *is* the Presence' and taught that this is meant in Exod. 33, 14, 'My Presence shall go with thee'; so also in 'the angel of His Presence delivered them' — the angel who is His Presence.<sup>57</sup>

Metator, Metatron, was, as has been shown, originally an appellative, in meaning and use corresponding closely to the English 'harbinger.' In the three places where it is found in the Babylonian Talmud it is the name of an angel. It is, however, a name of unusual type,<sup>58</sup> for the names of angels are generally compounds containing the word *el*, 'God,' after the pattern of the biblical Gabriel and Michael. It is therefore a pertinent question whether the angel who is designated in the Midrash by the appellative and named in the Talmud by the appropriated appellative — if it be the same angel — is one who is otherwise known to us under a proper name.

We have seen that R. Idi,<sup>59</sup> in his answer to the heretic, declares with emphasis that so far from worshipping Metatron, the Israelites would not accept him even as a 'precursor' when God offered to send him before them to guard them on their way and guide them to the place prepared for them (Exod. 23, 20). It was this angel, who after the death of Moses appeared to Joshua (Josh. 5, 13 ff.).<sup>60</sup> As 'the captain of the Lord's host,' he was identified by mediaeval commentators<sup>61</sup> with Michael who is 'one of the chief princes,' 'your prince' (Dan. 10, 13, 21), 'the great prince' (*ibid.* 12, 1), the champion of the Jews.<sup>62</sup> According to others, it was Michael who led the Israelites through the desert.

At an earlier point in the same discussion Rabbi Idi answers the question, Who is the subject in the words, 'Unto Moses he said, Ascend unto the Lord'? by saying, 'The speaker is Metatron, whose name is like the name of his master.' The same exegetical difficulty is discovered by the Palestinian Targum on Exod. 24, 1, and resolved: 'Unto Moses, Michael, the prince of wisdom, said, on the seventh day of the month, Go up before (into the presence of) the Lord.'<sup>63</sup> At the death of Moses, when God is lamenting his loss, asking who now will intercede for Israel when they sin, Metatron came and fell on his face, and said, Lord of the World, in his life Moses was Thine and in his death he is Thine.'<sup>64</sup> In the parallel narrative in Midrash Mishle, 'Michael came and prostrated himself before God, and said, Lord of the World, in his life he was Thine, and in his death he is Thine.'<sup>65</sup>

Metatron appears in a somewhat similar rôle in one of the collections of proems, or introductions, for the use of synagogue preachers which are prefixed to the old Palestinian Midrash on Lamentations. God was mourning over the destruction of the temple; he had no longer a dwelling place on earth.<sup>66</sup> 'In that hour Metatron came and fell upon his face and said, 'Lord of the World, I will weep, but Thou shalt not weep.' God replied, 'If thou do not let me weep now I will enter into a place into which thou art not permitted to enter, and will weep (there), as it is written, 'If ye will not hear it, My soul shall weep in secret for your pride' (Jer. 13, 17).'<sup>67</sup>

Even in late mystical texts the same functions are attributed to Metatron and to Michael. The most striking example of this is the presenting offerings in the celestial sanctuary. In the Talmud this is the office of Michael — 'Michael the great prince stands and offers upon the altar.'<sup>68</sup> In one recension of the Seder Gan Eden, a mediaeval work, we read that in the highest heaven (Araboth) the great prince Michael stands, with an altar before him, and offers upon the altar the souls of the righteous.<sup>69</sup> In another mediaeval Midrash this office is performed by Metatron. 'R. Simeon said, In the hour when God bade Israel to erect the tabernacle he made a sign to the ministering angels that they should make a tabernacle, and at the time when it was erected below, it was erected above.<sup>70</sup> This is the tabernacle of the Youth whose name is Metatron in which he offers the souls of the righteous to atone for Israel in the days of their exile.'<sup>71</sup>

In various places, particularly in Palestinian sources, we thus find the name Michael where parallel passages have Metatron. In explanation of this fact the following hypothesis may be advanced. The word *metator*, or *metatron*, as an appellative, meaning one who leads the way, was first used of God himself, particularly in reference to the migration of Israel from Egypt to Canaan, or of the angel whom he commissioned to guard and guide them in the way and bring them to their destination — whether it was thought that he actually led them through the desert, or that at Moses' petition his commission was suspended, so that he did not assume his leadership until after the death of Moses, when he announced himself to Joshua before Jericho as the captain of the Lord's host. If it was asked who this angel leader was, the inevitable answer would be Michael, the captain ('prince') whom God had appointed over his people, their champion and protector.<sup>72</sup>

All the offices and function of the angel Metatron in the older sources, and even in the Babylonian Talmud, are such as might naturally be ascribed to the guardian angel of the Jews.<sup>73</sup> The Metatron whom Elisha ben Abuyah saw in heaven was sitting (by special privilege) and recording the good deserts of Israelites, an appropriate occupation for their special patron; and

no other angel could more appropriately share with God himself the task of instructing in religion the little souls whose early death had deprived them of human teachers. So again, when God would weep over the destruction of the temple, the words, 'I will weep, but do not thou weep,' have a fitness and a force in the mouth of the angel to whom Israel was committed as his peculiar charge; while they lack this point altogether if supposed to be spoken by some mythical associate divinity. Similarly, when God, bewailing the death of Moses, asks who now will stand between the people and His righteous indignation, it is most fitly the angelic advocate of Israel who reminds Him that Moses is still His; that is, I take it, that Moses may intercede for Israel in heaven as he had done on earth. Even in a late apocalyptic book, the *Sefer Zerubbabel*, Metatron says: 'I am the angel who led Abraham in all the land of Canaan; it was I who ransomed Isaac and wrestled with Jacob at the ford of Jabbok; and I that led Israel in the wilderness forty years in the name of the Lord; I who appeared to Joshua at Gilgal. I am he whose name is like the name of his master, and his name is in me.'<sup>74</sup> These are things that are regularly ascribed to Michael, and in the text itself the name Michael slips in for the angel who makes the revelation to Zerubbabel and is otherwise consistently called Metatron.<sup>75</sup> Metator was a foreign word; the precise technical meaning which so well suited the earlier contexts in which we find it used easily passed in ordinary apprehension into the vaguer sense of 'one who leads, or shows, the way,' which is current in Jewish commentators and lexicographers. In Babylonia especially, where Roman military terms were not familiar as they were in Palestine, it was naturally taken for a proper name instead of an appellative, the proper name of an angel; though even there the association with Michael was not wholly forgotten.<sup>76</sup>

Detached from the original connection with the exodus, Metatron became more exclusively a celestial figure, such as he is in the story of Elisha ben Abuyah's fall, or when he is the teacher of children in the school of heaven. This is as far as the Babylonian Talmud goes. As *sar ha-panim* he is the chief of the 'angels of the presence' who have immediate access to

God. In the succeeding Gaonic period, however, there was a notable revival of curiosity about the mysteries of heaven and earth such as at a much earlier time gave origin to apocalypses like Enoch, with a corresponding recurrence to apocalyptic tours through the heavens under angelic conduct; and, as in the earlier time, with its mystery of creation and its chariot speculation, a theosophic motive enters into these adventures — it is one of the main sources of the older Cabala.

In this literature, which, characteristically enough, produced new Enoch books and descriptions by the mystical travellers of the heavens that rise one above another to the highest and the throne of God itself, with the angelic hierarchy that inhabits them, Metatron has a prominent place. It does not fall within the scope of our present investigation to accompany Metatron through this literature, much less to pursue him into the later Cabala. On one point, however, a word must be said. It has been argued above that the angel Metatron was originally Michael. In the writings now under consideration Metatron is commonly the translated Enoch.<sup>77</sup> What led to this identification can only be conjectured. The most probable hypothesis is perhaps that it originated in the occupation of Metatron in the story of Elisha ben Abuyah, where he appears as a recording angel;<sup>78</sup> for a similar function is attributed to Enoch in the Book of Jubilees 4, 23: 'He was taken away from among men, and we conducted him into the Garden of Eden (Paradise) with majesty and honor, and behold he writes there the judgment and the sentence upon the world, and all the evil deeds of mankind.'<sup>79</sup> So also Enoch (in heaven) is addressed, 'Enoch, thou scribe of righteousness' (Enoch 12, 4; 15, 1). To the same office the Palestinian Targum on Gen. 5, 24 probably refers: 'Enoch worshipped in truth before the Lord, and he was not found among the inhabitants of the earth, for he was rapt away and ascended to the firmament by the word of God, and his name was called Mitatron, the great scribe.'<sup>80</sup>

Inasmuch as flesh and blood have no place in that upper world, God transformed Enoch's body into the fiery matter of which angels are made.<sup>81</sup> He prepared him a throne just like

His own, covered with similar tapestry, and caused to be proclaimed that He had appointed him prince and chief of all the princes of His kingdom and all the celestial beings except the eight honored and revered princes who are called *Ihvh*, by His own eternal name. Every angel who has anything to communicate with God is to come to Metatron and speak to him, and whatever he bids them in God's name they shall observe and do, because he is the prince of wisdom and of intelligence, which minister to him and instruct him in heavenly and earthly wisdom, the wisdom of this world and the mystery of the world to come. He is also appointed over all of the temple on high, and over all the storehouses of life in the highest heavens. Metatron-Enoch has seventy names corresponding to the seventy languages of earth, but God himself calls him 'Youth' (נער).

This name, Youth, is explained by Metatron himself: it was given him by the ministering angels over whom he was set, because he was a junior among them and a youth (in comparison with the angels of the original creation).<sup>82</sup> It is this late assumption into the angelic ranks that is urged in the *Tosafot* against the identification of Metatron-Enoch with the Talmudic *sar ha-'olam*.<sup>83</sup> If a modern conjecture, at variance with the explanation above put into the mouth of Metatron, is legitimate, the suggestion may be ventured that 'Enoch, the Youth,' has no more recondite origin than a purely verbal association with Prov. 22, 6 (חנך לנער על פי דרכו). It is easy to see how convenient these lucubrations were to Christian scholars in search of a Jewish counterpart to the Second Person of the Trinity. By way of the equivalence of the uncreated Metatron and Shekinah which the cabalists offered them, they found what they required; and the more concrete Metatron answered their purpose even better than the (etymologically) abstract Shekinah.<sup>84</sup>

By a similar equation they found the Messiah in Metatron. The Jews recognized Metatron in Jacob's angel 'redeemer' (Gen. 48, 16), the 'angel of His presence' who saved God's people (Isa. 63, 9), the 'angel of the covenant' who was suddenly to come to his temple (Mal. 3, 1), and, in general, in the

Angel of the Lord, whose personality so often seems to merge into that of the Lord himself. Christians identified this angel with Christ in his office under the old dispensation — the Messiah designate, we might say. Thus, by the axiom that things which are equal to the same thing are equal to each other, it was proved that Metatron was the Messiah.

The Christian authors who maintain this deceive themselves by a fallacy of equivocation. There is no evidence that the Jews associated either the Angel of the Lord or Metatron with the Messiah. Hengstenberg, indeed, avers that 'the identity of the Angel of Jehovah, or Metatron, with the Messiah was recognized even by the later Jews'; but, besides the fact that in the New Testament this 'is assumed to be universally accepted,' he adduces only a single passage from the Zohar (through Sommer, p. 35),<sup>85</sup> where there is nothing whatever about the Messiah, but in which he finds a prediction of the incarnation of Metatron in a mother's womb <sup>86</sup> — certainly a singular mark by which to recognize a Jewish reference to the Messiah!

To summarize the results of this wide-ranging and in part intricate investigation: 1. *Meṭaṭor* (*meṭaṭron*) is originally an appellative, the Latin *metator*, borrowed and first used in its proper, almost technical, sense, an officer who goes in advance of an army to choose and mark out the site of a camp, and to explore and indicate the route by which the halting place is to be reached. Israel's *metator* in the desert was God himself, or an angel assigned and commissioned by him to this task; this office was most naturally filled by Michael, the champion of the Jews. 2. In two passages in the Babylonian Talmud Metatron is the proper name of an angel whose office in heaven indicates a peculiar relation to Israel and interest in them; and in this stage the same offices, notably the ministry at the celestial altar with the offering of the souls of the righteous, and the same predicates, are assigned in different sources, now to Michael, now to Metatron. 3. In the revived apocalyptic and cabalistic literature of the Gaonic period and after, the translated Enoch becomes Metatron; his earthly body is transmuted into fire, and he takes his place among the angels, over whom

he is advanced to the first rank and supreme rule, thus taking the place held in the older angelology by Michael. Theosophic speculation seizes upon this angelic mythology, and elevates Metatron to a still higher eminence, until as we have seen, he—more properly, it—is identified with the Shekinah; it is an emanation, not a creature; and, as the ‘middle column,’ unites the four worlds that are superimposed in stages (the worlds of emanations, of creative ideas, of creative formations, and of creative matter),<sup>87</sup> etc.

In all this, from the metaphor in which he begins to the metaphysical myth in which he ends, whatever else Metatron may be or do, whether he is an individual created angel or an emanation from the Absolute, he is neither in function, nor in essence an ‘intermediary,’ or ‘mediator,’ in the sense in which that word is generally understood and in which it is intended by those who write about him in that category. As if the cabalistic myths were not fantastic enough, Christian theologians have added to them their own, at first to claim him for their Christology, latterly to discredit Judaism with him.



## NOTES — II. METATRON

1. *Miscellanea Sacra*, lib. i, c. 17, § 7. For a modern instance, see p. 70, and below, n. 71.

2. See D. Hoffmann, *Zur Einleitung in die halachischen Midraschim*, 1887.

3. Another reading is, 'The finger of God was made a *meṭatron*,' etc. So quoted by R. Moses ben Nahman on Exod. 12, 12; Eshtori Parḥi, *Kaftor u-Perah*, f. 49b (ed. Berlin, 1852, f. 34b).

4. Compare R. Akiba (Sifrè on Num. 27, 12, § 136), 'God showed Moses all the divisions (lit., compartments) of the land of Israel like a table laid out.'

5. The Rabbis named, Eliezer ben Hyrcanus and his most frequent opponent Joshua ben Hananiah, were disciples of Johanan ben Zakkai and flourished in the generation after the fall of Jerusalem. In Sifrè on Num. 27, 12 (§ 136) it is the latter interpretation that is ascribed to Eliezer. See Bacher, *Agada der Tannaiten*, I, 2 ed. 148.

6. Compare also *Yalkut in loc.* (§ 949). See the explanation in *Pesikta Zutarta* cited in Friedmann's note on Sifrè, Deut. *loc. cit.*

7. Contemporaries of Akiba, in the first third of the second century. See below, p. 70.

8. מֵטָטְרוֹן. Variants (Theodor, p. 34): מֵטָטְרוֹר, מֵטָטְרוֹ, *al.* In the editio princeps and those that follow it: R. Levi said, Some interpreters interpret with Ben Azzai and Ben Zoma, The voice of God was made a *meṭatron* to Moses in the hour when He said to him, Go up to Mount Abarim (Deut. 32, 49—it guided him to the unknown spot where he was to die and be buried). The voice of God was made a *meṭatron* over the waters, etc.

9. The first great lexicon of the language of the Talmud and Midrash, compiled by Nathan ben Jehiel of Rome (d. 1106). This lexicon contains many quotations from works no longer extant, and many readings in extant works representing an earlier and often better text than our editions.

10. *Tanḥuma*, Ki Tissa, *loc.*

11. On this passage, which is often referred to in the following pages, there is a learned monograph by Joh. Jac. Cramer, *Custos Israelis*, seu *Dissertatio philologico-theologica in Exodi cap. xxiii. v. 20, 21, 22, 23, qua Angelum Israelis tutorem unigenitum Dei filium, et verum aeternumque Deum esse solide, etiam ex Hebraeorum consensu demonstratur*. 1705. Cf. also his *Dissert. in Exod. xxxiii. 1-6; 12 ff., xxxiv. 5-10*.

12. *Shemoth Rabbah* on Exod. 23, 20 (edit. Wilna, 1884, c. 32, 2, f. 60b).

13. So Aruk, edit. prin. (see Kohut, *s. v.*); later editions, *meṭator* (sing.). *Tanḥuma*, Balak § 10: 'Showing that he (Balak) had sent messengers (*sheluhim*) to apprise him' (of Balaam's approach); ed. Buber, § 14, 'messengers to Balak to apprise him.'

14. He suggests a possible etymology in a different sense, from Aram. נָטַר, 'keep, protect,' equivalent to Hebrew שָׁמַר (cf. Exod. 23, 20).

15. See also *Yalkut*, Gen. § 44 (from *Midrash Abkir*): 'God despatched *Meṭatron* as a messenger (*shalih*) to *Shemḥazai*,' one of the angels who fell. It is possible that *shalih* is a gloss. Cf. Jellinek, *Bet ha-Midrash IV*, 127 f., and the *Book of Enoch*, 12, 4 ff.

16. The words are ambiguous: Was it the Lord who bade Moses ascend to Metatron, or Metatron who bade him ascend to the Lord? The cabalists were divided on this question (Recanati, quoted by Danz, pp. 735 f.); modern scholars equally. Bacher takes the former alternative; Kohut the latter.

17. See below, n. 72.

18. I.e. do not exchange (confound) me with him; taking אל תמר בו 'do not rebel against him' as אל תמירני בו (cf. Jer. 2, 11). The same explanation is given in Shemoth Rabbah 32, 4, where a commentator correctly remarks, 'Do not imagine that he is God.'

19. The heretic's argument is that 'he will not' implies that he has the power to do so, a power that is a divine prerogative.

20. Tanhuma, a Persian word found elsewhere in the Talmud in the sense of 'precursor, courier, messenger,' corresponding thus in general sense with *metator*, *metastron*, in the Palestinian sources discussed above. R. Hananel (on Sanh. loc.) interprets תייר ('scout').

21. Tanhuma, Mishpatim, § 18 init.; ed. Buber § 10.

22. See especially Agadath Bereshith 32 (ed. Buber, p. 64 f.).

23. The ending *on* is appended to many foreign words where it does not properly belong. See S. Krauss, Griechische und Lateinische Lehnwörter, I, 192. With the doublet compare סנינור and סנינורן (συνήγορος).

24. 'The language of Javan,' might be Greek or Latin. These Rabbis seem to make no difference. The words of Ramban are translated in full by Danz, pp. 723 f.

25. Egidio of Viterbo, general of the Augustinian order, in whose house in Rome Elias lived for thirteen years (1513-27), as the cardinal's teacher, especially in the Cabala.

26. Subtitle (Latin): Sive de convenientia vocabulorum rabbinicorum cum Graecis et quibusdam aliis linguis Europaeis (1638).

27. J. A. Danz, Schekina cum piis cohabitans ad Joh. xiv, 23, Progr. iii-iv. (In Meuschen, Novum Testamentum ex Talmude illustratum (1736), pp. 721 ff.) Cf. also Joh. Jac. Cramer, Dissert. in Exod. xxiii, 20-23, pp. 103 ff. (1705).

29. Largely drawn — with due credit — from Du Cange, Glossarium ad scriptores mediae et infimae Latinitatis (1678).

30. These are the examples cited by Du Cange and from him by Danz. What I have done is to take the text from modern critical editions, and, where it seemed to conduce to the understanding of the passage, to quote a larger context.

31. Peter Chrysologus calls John the Baptist, Metator Domini.

32. Related to German 'Herberge,' originally, 'army quarters.'

33. Murray, New English Dictionary, s. v.

34. The authors evidently imagine that *metator* is derived from *metiri*!

35. The Jewish Encyclopedia (VIII, 519 — Ludwig Blau), which is alleged as authority for the statement, gives no excuse for the misunderstanding, nor does Hagigah 15a (not '15b'), which the authors cite but have evidently not read.

36. That the word is really as old as the beginning of the second century appears from the Palestinian sources quoted above. Why if, as the authors tell us, Elisha ben Abuyah (a Palestinian) used the word, a Latin derivation

is more improbable because the story as told in the Babylonian Talmud is inscrutable.

37. The propensity of dilettanti for displaying their ingenuity and their acquaintance with foreign dictionaries in combinations which justify the ancient jibe, 'Etymology is a science in which vowels count for nothing and consonants for very little,' is to be taken into account.

38. In ed. Amsterdam 1726, which I have used, f. 114a.

39. *Matrona*, *Matronita*, is a contribution from the Cabala. By a similar etymological path Levi ben Gerson (d. 1344), on Prov. 1, 8, 'Forsake not the teaching of thy mother,' identifies *metatron* with the *sekel ha-po'el* (active intellect) of his Aristotelian philosophy.

40. I.e. Latin *metator*. The *n* is Bahya's own addition to the confusion. Ramban, whom he is copying, has correctly *metator*. Buxtorf, who quotes the passage at length in his lexicon, makes the impossible conjecture that the author was thinking of *μηνύτωρ* (poetic for *μηνυτής*), which he renders by *nuncius*; in reality it means an informer (*delator*). Gfroerer charges this etymological juggling to Bahya. Danz guessed *mandatarius*!

41. Oesterley and Box express themselves as if this explanation originated with Weber.

42. *Christologie*, 2d ed. III. 2, p. 79.

43. 'Mitatron ist nämlich der Mitthroner Gottes, ὁ μέτοχος τοῦ θρόνου, ὁ σύνθρονος, oder der Herr, der zur Rechten des Herrn sitzt (Ps. cx. 1), der Sohn, der mit dem Vater auf seinem Throne sitzt (Apoc. iii, 21).'

44. Oesterley and Box, who, after Weber, give their readers the choice of *Metathronos* and *Metatyrranos*, remark: 'We cannot, however, follow Weber when he speaks of the analogy of the Crown Prince,' etc. This 'analogy' is not Weber's; it is a gratuitous ineptitude of Schnedermann in the second edition, who to Weber's 'der nächste nach dem Herrscher' adds '(gleichsam dem Kronprinz).'

45. 'Ueber die jüdische Angelologie und Dämonologie' (in *Abhandlungen für die Kunde des Morgenlandes*, IV. 3 (1866), and separately, pp. 36-42. Also in his *Aruch Completum*, V (1889), 119 f.

46. Pseudonym of Selig Korn.

47. An anniversary publication of Schul-Pforta, in which Schmieder was a professor. To this rather rare pamphlet I was directed by a reference in Hengstenberg.

48. Plutarch, *De Iside et Osiride*, 46. Many others have been captivated by the word *μεσίτης*, ignoring Plutarch's own interpretation, a middle thing between God and the Devil, or between light and darkness, or putting conjectures of their own in its place.

49. *Tos. Hagigah* 2, 3; *Hagigah* 14b-15; *Jer. Hagigah*, ii, 1(f. 77b).

50. In a rapture (cf. Paul's account of such an experience, 2 Cor. 12, 1-4: he was 'rapt into Paradise and heard unutterable things, which it is not permitted a man to speak'). Such experiences are meant to be understood literally.

51. Since the bodies of angels are constituted of fire, this is the natural form of castigation.

52. On this passage see L. Ginzberg in the *Jewish Encyclopedia*, V, 138 f.; also *Tosafot* on *Hag. 14b*.

53. Deduced from Isa. 28, 9.

54. In the Jerusalem Talmud there is none of it.

55. *Op. cit.* p. 172. And on the next page (with the same references, Hullin 60a; Yebamot 16b): 'His function of representing God is perhaps seen most distinctly in the title that is given him of the 'Prince of the World' (*sar ha-'olam*), which shows that he was thought of as the ruler of the world.' That one of these passages is in the Jerusalem Talmud is an original discovery. All that is said about the *sar ha-'olam* in the places cited is that he uttered certain verses of Scripture on certain occasions. In Hullin, when God said, 'after its kind,' of the trees (Gen. 1, 11), the *sar ha-'olam* said, 'May the glory of the Lord be forever; let the Lord rejoice in his works' (Psalm 104, 31). What prompted him to this ejaculation was that the grasses and herbs, notwithstanding that God did not say of them 'after its kind,' argue a fortiori that he could not mean them to be all mixed up, and accordingly appeared by species like the rest (vs. 12). In Yebamot the words of Psalm 37, 25, 'I have been young and now am old (yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken,' etc.), were uttered by the *sar ha-'olam*, upon occasion of the calamities described in Lam. 5, 11, 'They have ravished the women in Zion, the maidens in the cities of Judah.' In neither place does the name Metatron occur, nor anything that remotely suggests him. Neither has the *sar ha-'olam* here any symptom of a ruler of the world, or 'a kind of demiurge' (Levy). Rashi's laconic gloss in 'an angel.'

56. Glosses by mediaeval French rabbis after Rashi. See on Yebamot 16b (פסוק); Hullin 60a (same catchword).

57. Thus, for example, Bahya ben Asher on Exod. 23, 21; cf. on Exod. 33, 14.

58. Sandalphon (συνάδελφος) is similar, but occurs only in one place in the Talmud (Hagigah 13b); elsewhere only in late writings, and never in Palestinian literature.

59. Above, p. 64 f.

60. Above, p. 65.

61. So Rashi (taking 'the Lord's host' as Israel), and others.

62. The Hebrew word translated 'captain' and 'prince' is the same (*sar*).

63. Cf. the same Targum on Deut. 34, 6, where Metatron and three others are the four 'princes of wisdom.'

64. Tanḥuma, Weethānan § 6 (ed. Buber, f. 7a). So also Grünhut, Liqqutim V, 105a (from Yelammedenu).

65. Midrash Mishle on 14, 34 (ed. Buber, f. 39b). A manuscript in the library of the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York has here Metatron instead of Michael (Jewish Encyclopedia, X, 231).

66. Cf. Berakot 3a, below.

67. Ekah Rabbati, Proem 24 (ed. Wilna f. 6d, top). On the secret place (μυστήριον) which God has, whither to retire and weep, see Hagigah 5b (on Jer. l.c.).

68. Hagigah 12b; Zebahim 62a; Menahot 110a. The formulation is consistent. See Lueken, Michael, pp. 30 f.

69. Jellinek, Bet ha-Midrash, III, 137.

70. So far, Tanḥuma, Naso, 18.

71. Bemidbar Rabbah, 12, 12 (ed. Wilna 1884, f. 49a), cf. Rev. 5, 8; 8, 3 (Psalm 141, 2). Oesterley and Box (p. 175) assert that in this place 'the term 'Mediator' is directly applied to Metatron, and, what is more significant, he is represented as the reconciler between God and the Chosen People.' The whole passage is quoted above in a literal translation. There is no word in the context, far and wide, which could remotely suggest 'Mediator,' to say nothing about being 'directly applied' to Metatron. (See this Review, XIV, 249). Weber, from whom the authors have their (blind) reference (without acknowledgment) renders the passage correctly. In so late a Midrash it is probable that the 'Youth whose name is Metatron' is meant to be the translated Enoch, of whom more is to be said hereafter; but the attribution of Michael's function to Metatron is independent of this identification.

72. It is possible that the meaning of the mysterious words 'for my name is in him,' was found in the name Michael. The words are usually paraphrased 'whose name is like the name of his master.' Etymological midrash found in *מִי כַמֶּכָּה מִיכָאֵל* a compound of *מִי כַמֶּכָּה* (Exod. 15, 11) 'Who is like Thee?' and *אֵין כֵּאל* (Deut. 33, 26) 'There is none like God.' 'My name is in him,' would then be the name *אֵל*, 'God,' not, as the cabalists imagined, the proper name יהוה, so that they even call him יהוה הקטן 'Jahveh Minor' (or 'Junior'), e.g. Jellinek, Bet ha-Midrash V, 175. Hence a Moslem polemic speaks of 'the little God' whom the Jews call Mitatron (Mas'udi, quoted by Schreiner, Zeitschrift der deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft, XLII, 598). The Moslem puts into the mouth of Metatron the lamentation which in Ekah Rabbathi, Proem. 24 (cf. Berakot 3a) is uttered by God.

73. In a Response of the Gaons Sherira and Hai (dated 992), it is said: Jacob said, 'The angel who redeemed me,' etc. (Gen. 48, 16), and Isaiah, 'The angel of His presence saved them.' This is the Prince of the Presence (*sar ha-panim*) of whom our Rabbis speak, Metatron. And we see how the Merciful (God) extols him, and makes known to Moses his honor and his greatness, as it is written, 'Behold I send,' etc., 'Beware of him,' etc. — A. Harkavy, Responsen der Geonim (1887), No. 173, p. 189.

74. Jellinek, Bet ha-Midrash II, 55.

75. L.c. p. 56, l. 11 from below. In another manuscript also at an earlier point (p. 55, below). The inconsistency is doubtless to be attributed to copyists; but testifies to the persistent survival of the identification.

76. The intercourse between Palestine and Babylonia and the study of Palestinian Midrash in Babylonia sufficiently explain this.

77. An angel who stands with Metatron in the highest rank, and sometimes takes precedence of him, is Sandalphon (*συνάδελφος*, sc. of Metatron), whom later cabalists identify with the translated Elijah.

78. The angelic scribe, Ezek. 9, 2 ff.; Enoch 89, 61 ff.; 90, 14, 22. In these places in Enoch probably Michael, as the guardian angel of Israel.

79. Not quite the same, for Metatron writes down the good deserts of Israelites; Enoch the judgment and sentence upon the world and all the evil deeds of mankind. It is the generation before the flood.

80. In the Midrash Elle Ezkere (Jellinek, Bet ha-Midrash II, 66): 'Metatron the great scribe' (or secretary) writes down and seals the decree of God against Edom (Rome).

81. With the assumption of Enoch and his ascent through the heavens compare the Ascension of Isaiah 7-11.

82. Jellinek, *Bet ha-Midrash*, V, 172.

83. See above, p. 72.

84. A summary of the doctrine of Metatron in the Zohar and appendixes with references to the sources may be found in *Eshel Abraham* by Abraham Rovigo (Fürth, 1701), f. 9 c. See also Danz, p. 735 (b) f. He is the first of the creations of God; to him God gave dominion over all his hosts; servant of God, the senior of his house, ruling over all; his name is like his master's, he is created in his image and likeness. He is a priest of the Most High; he takes the souls of the righteous up (to heaven) every night. In more distinctively cabalistic conception Metatron unites (or connects) the stages (דרגין) of the four-story universe, from top to bottom and bottom to top. He is the 'middle column' (עמודא דאמצעיתא) reaching up and down to both extremities, like the 'middle bar' in the tabernacle, which passed through from end to end (Exod. 26, 28). It is in Metatron that the Lord is revealed in his Shekinah, e.g. to Ezekiel. Metatron, who is called *sar hanpanim*, is as it were a vesture enveloping Metatron who is called Shaddai; the Lord and his Shekinah are in the midst of the latter. Later cabalists found the distinction between two Metatrons intimated in the spelling of the word: מיטטרון is the Shekinah; מטטרון is the angel of the Shekinah, an envoy or minister (Tikkune Zohar, and Cordovero, *Pardes Rimmonim*, quoted by Danz, 735 (b), 736 (c); more fully, Sommer, *Theologia Soharaica*, pp. 36 f.). The *Eshel Abraham* is innocent of this refinement. In the *Yalkut Rubeni* the doctrine is even more explicitly stated. The author finds in the Zohar two Metatrons, Major and Minor; the latter is a created being, a messenger; the Great Metatron is an emanation (Danz, 737 (d)). It is perhaps not superfluous to call particular attention in the foregoing to the phrase 'the middle column,' with its context and explanation, since, especially in the Latin *columna medietatis*, it is exposed to the misunderstanding that some kind of an intermediary, or 'mediatorial,' place and function is attributed to Metatron.

85. The servant of God, the senior of his house, etc. is Metatron, of whom we have said: (Gen. 24, 2).

86. Sommer: 'Futurus sit ut conjugatur corpori in utero materno.' Similia legimus de Christo Psalm lx, 7-9. — Sommer has apparently forgotten that *σωμα δὲ κατηρτίσω μοι* is LXX (and N. T.), but not in the Hebrew text. If the language of the Zohar is rightly understood, it would only be one of many evidences of the influence of Christian ideas, or a desire to match them, in late developments of the Cabala.

87. Aşilut, Beriyah, Yeşira, 'Asiyah. Ginsberg, 'Cabala,' *Jewish Encyclopedia*, III, 475.